

THE 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL

# XERISCAPE

WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
SCOTT MILLARD

# AWARDS

**Arizona Department of Water Resources  
& Tohono Chul Park team up to honor  
Tucson's best water-smart landscapes**

**1<sup>ST</sup> ★ PLACE**

HOMEOWNER CATEGORY

**Best Design to Attract Wildlife**

Timm residence

# THE AWARDS

## HOMEOWNER CATEGORY

- 1st place: Wendy Timm

## PUBLIC EDUCATION CATEGORY

- 1st place: Harelson Elementary School

## RESIDENTIAL, PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY

- 1st place: Joe Billings, The Landscaping Artist, for the Colville residence
- 2nd place: Marla Ruane, Greening Fine Gardens, for the Schorr residence

## JUDGES' AWARDS

- Best Design to Attract Wildlife, homeowner category—Wendy Timm
- Special Treatment of a Hillside/Slope, homeowner category—J. P. Bradley
- Best Collection of Cactus & Succulents, homeowner category—Valarie Miller
- Best Use of Water Harvesting, homeowner category—Deborah Tosline
- Best Use of Natives, residential, professional category—Roberta Braegelmann, Sonoran Gardens, for the Luevano/Trinder Residence
- Best Water Harvesting in a Small Space, residential, professional category—Lesley Mansur, for the Pomeroy residence
- Best Retrofit of a High-Water-Use Landscape, residential, professional category—Marla Ruane, Greening Fine Gardens, for the Schorr Residence

"This town is full of surprises."

These were the words of one Xeriscape Contest judge after reviewing several entries in the Arizona Department of Water Resources and Tohono Chul Park Xeriscape Contest. Van-loads of judges—landscape designers and consultants, botanical-garden staff members and water purveyors—made the rounds around town, observing and critiquing the landscaping efforts of fellow Tucsonans, professionals and non-professionals alike.

The verdict? The tradition and influence of Xeriscape is alive and well in the Old Pueblo. In addition, Tucson Xeriscapes are enhanced by large doses of creativity—with gardeners introducing their own personal interests in art, sculpture, plant collecting, and developing wildlife habitats, to name a few. The results become a rich tapestry of gardens creating remarkable outdoor living areas—all the while conserving water.

So what is Xeriscape exactly? The term comes from the Greek word *xeros*, which means dry. Xeriscape is a landscaping philosophy composed of seven linked principles. It is commonly practiced in many states, including Arizona, Florida, Colorado, Texas, and California—wherever water resources and rainfall are at a premium.

Don't allow the "zero" sound in Xeriscape to mislead you. A well-designed Xeriscape typically brims with well-chosen and well-placed plants that naturally consume small amounts of water. A Xeriscape offers its owners much in return, including a desirable place to spend time outdoors. A good Xeriscape draws you in, then entices you to stay awhile.

### Best Design to Attract Wildlife, homeowner category—Timm residence

"Surprising." "Fun." "Good eye for what's nice." "Used inexpensive materials to great effect."

When an artist gardens, good things tend to happen. Such is the case for artist-sculptor Wendy Timm. Creating the landscape in phases beginning in 1997, Timm drew inspiration from the plants and gardens of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson Botanical Gardens, and Tohono Chul Park. Two of Timm's goals were to reintroduce native plants and create wildlife habitats. The resulting landscape has a natural feel that appeals to birds and animals as well as to humans.

Timm also wanted to incorporate her artwork and sculptures, which she has done seamlessly. A linked network of trails meanders through the gardens, with pieces of her art surprising visitors all along the way. Whimsy fills the garden, as evidenced by the desert octopus sculpture that sprouts from the ground, to the machine-gun-toting bunny, to the life-size body sculptures of the artist and several of her friends. "I really got a feeling for her as a person, walking through her gardens," said one judge.

As Timm relates, she wanted her landscape to be about "...artwork, old trees, new trees, special places to rest. Relax, smile, look, and enjoy." The judges certainly did.







### Special Treatment of a Hillside/Slope, homeowner category—Bradley residence

“Interesting paths make me want to explore.” “Nice collection of cactus and succulents.” “Rock paths resist erosion.”

The westside landscape of J. P. Bradley serves as more than a place to spend time—it has become Bradley’s primary hobby. He planted and installed every last part of the landscape, from site design, to plantings, to all physical improvements, since 1997. What makes this fact extraordinary—during this time Bradley was legally blind.

Bradley collected most of the specimens on-site from salvaged and discarded plants, which he then propagated to fill in the landscape or serve as gifts to friends and neighbors. Utilizing “found” plants and sweat equity kept the total cost of landscape installation to less than \$2,000. The cactus and succulents that line the pathways in profusion don’t seem to care that they came free, displaying their riotous colors alongside gravel paths that wander and loop up a steep, formerly unusable hillside. The National Wildlife Federation has even certified the backyard area as a wildlife habitat.

### Judges’ Award for Best Collection of Cactus & Succulents, homeowner category—Miller residence

“An eclectic collection.” “Very well maintained.” “Unusual, interesting specimens.”

Although not a Xeriscape in the literal sense, the cactus and succulent collection of Valarie Miller so struck the judges it received their award for Best Collection of Cactus & Succulents. Most of Miller’s plants were originally grown in containers, but she soon discovered they would thrive with minimal water when planted in the ground. The sculptural qualities of the large boobums, senita, *Cereus peruvianus* (Peruvian apple), and many others are so eye-catching visitors are prone to just stop and stare awhile. Miller keeps her oasis garden (front yard) meticulously maintained, with personal artifacts, antique machine parts, and whatnots interspersed amid the plants to add interest.



## THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF XERISCAPE

### 1. Thoughtful landscape planning & design

Begin with a plan, whether it’s a new or remodeled landscape. A good design will avoid wasting your water, time, and money. Think long-term, and be realistic about the space requirements of mature plants. This will help you avoid maintenance headaches later on.

### 2. Select low-water-use plants

Many books exist on this subject, and hundreds of native plants, as well as plants from other low-rainfall regions, are adapted to grow in the Tucson area. Keep Principle Number 1 foremost in mind before buying plants for your Xeriscape. A good design is invaluable in selecting and combining water-efficient plants that will add beauty and utility to your outdoor areas. Call the ADWR Tucson office (770-3816) for a free drought-tolerant, low-water-use plant list.

### 3. Appropriate turf (lawn) areas

Lawns use a lot of water. For that reason, include them when only a lawn will do, as in a children’s play area. Keep the lawn area small and simple in shape, and border it with low-water-use plants. Select adapted grasses such as hybrid Bermudas. Avoid using lawns only as a ground cover—use other water-composed granite use zero water and can be effective as well.

### 4. Efficient irrigation

Drip-irrigation systems are efficient at applying water to plants in the right amounts at the root zone. Use a timer and adjust schedules as plant needs change with age and from season to season. Check systems regularly to be sure they are working properly. If you water with a hose, learn the water requirements of all your plants—they can vary quite a bit. Check soil for moisture to see if





### Judges' Award for Best Use of Water Harvesting, homeowner category—Tosline residence

"Effective water harvesting." "Low-water-use plants in front yard."

Deborah Tosline had several goals in mind when she re-designed both her front and back yards. She wanted to create an environment reflecting the Sonoran Desert that would conserve water, provide wildlife habitat, and increase privacy. She succeeded on all counts. Hills and channels in the front-yard area catch rainfall runoff from the front and back yards and front roof, which directs water to low-water-use plants such as foothills palo verde, hop bush, leather-leaf acacia, and desert spoon. The plants, installed in 1994, provide privacy and screening from a park directly across the street. The front yard received the Judges' Award for Best Use of Water Harvesting, homeowner category.

The backyard theme is "mini-oasis"—with an unusual sunken garden (think sunken living room) with a lawn for a carpet. Tosline's vision was to create an intimate place to relax, buffered from the noise of the city. Sections of below-ground-level flagstone benches provide ample seating, and surrounding low-water-use plants attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

### 1st Place, Public Education—Harelson Elementary School

"For a schoolyard, it is outstanding." "Tree selection was nice—eclectic and unusual."

A broad array of low-water-use plants, many of them natives, create the landscaping in the school's courtyard. The scene takes on a mini-botanical garden atmosphere, with most plants properly labeled with their scientific names, which helps to educate students, staff, and visiting parents. Benches also serve as water-harvesting dams, collecting and concentrating storm runoff to irrigate plants. The large square footage of classroom rooftops yields hundreds of gallons of water that formerly went to waste.

1ST ★ PLACE

PUBLIC EDUCATION CATEGORY

Harelson Elementary School



plants actually need water. Avoid sprinkling; water deeply and infrequently after new plants are established.

### 5. Improve the soil

Adding organic matter to the soil before planting increases its water- and nutrient-holding capacity, which improves plant growth and efficient use of water. Annuals, perennials, and vegetables—plants planted in close proximity to one another—are prime candidates. Low-water-use native trees, shrubs, and ground covers usually do just fine in unimproved existing soil, but they often appreciate organic mulches. (See Principle Number 6.)

### 6. Use mulches

Mulch is a layer of just about any material—organic or inorganic—that covers the soil over the root area of plants. Mulch reduces moisture loss through evaporation, insulates plant

roots from heat and cold extremes, and cuts down on weed populations that steal water and nutrients from your plants. Add a few inches of organic mulch each spring—it will decompose to improve the soil.

### 7. Appropriate maintenance

Healthy plants grow and look better, as you would naturally expect, and use water more efficiently. Prune properly at the right time of year. Do not prune heavily at any one time, particularly during summer. Keep a close and regular eye out for pests and diseases. You want to spot them early when controls are easier and more effective. Keep up with weeds. Don't overfertilize, which can result in excessive plant growth that requires even more pruning.





### Best Use of Natives, residential, professional category—Roberta Braegelmann, Sonoran Gardens, for the Luevano/Trinder residence

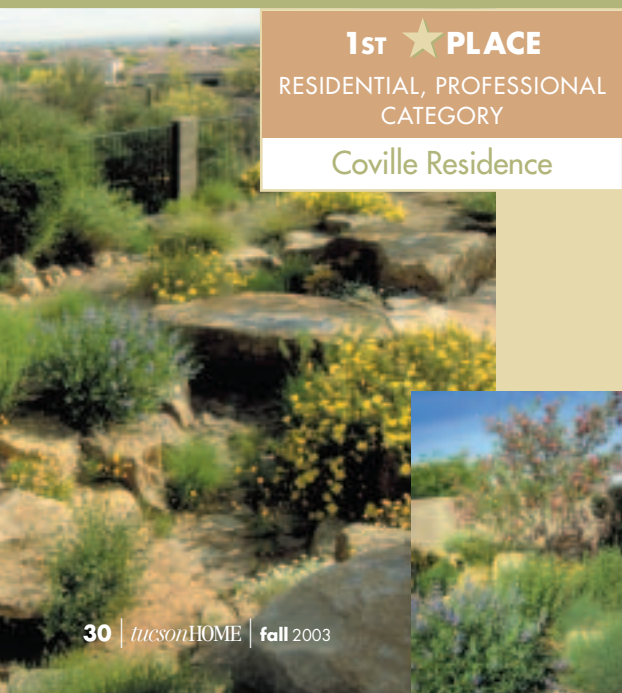
The goal for this Xeriscape design was simple: Enhance a natural, undisturbed desert landscape with Southwest native plants that offer color and interest. Plants selected were required to meet a few additional standards as well, including low water use, attraction of birds, and minimum maintenance. Braegelmann gave preference to native Sonoran and Chihuahuan Desert plants to maintain the design's objective and appearance. Trees included Texas mountain laurel, sweet acacia, and little-leaf palo verde. Featured flowering shrubs include chuparosa, the pungently scented mountain marigold, littleleaf cordia, and Mexican honeysuckle. *Damianitia* and trailing indigo bush add color and utility as ground covers. Penstemon, red yucca, and golden barrels bring even more color and texture to the scene.

Existing native plants able to contribute to the overall design were inventoried before construction and planting. Native mesquites, brittlebush, Baja fairy duster, and *opuntia* species cactus only added to the effect. Because the site was relatively flat, Braegelmann created an earth berm to increase height and interest while aiding rainfall harvesting. A rock pathway meanders unobtrusively through the backyard, allowing visitors the opportunity to notice the seasonal changes of plants close-up, and observe birds and wildlife.

### Judges' Award for Best Water Harvesting in a Small Space—residential, professional category, Lesley Mansur, for the Pomeroy residence

"Very nice contouring to catch water." "Landscape very inviting to wildlife."

Lesley Mansur actually performed an extensive retrofit of an existing landscape at the Pomeroy's Oro Valley residence. The goal was to create a landscape to attract butterflies and birds, with various outdoor rooms within the yard for residents and guests. The want list also included year-round color from flowers and shrubs. Specific needs included personal features such as private nooks for reading and relaxing, a prime spot for barbecue and chef, and clear access to the sky for stargazing. Because the available area was not large—less than 1,300 square feet—Mansur selected each contemplated feature and plant with care. Although originally labeled a "bird and butterfly garden," regular visits from a family of bobcats have compelled the Pomeroy's and Mansur to change the name to "wildlife attractant garden"!



1st ★ PLACE

RESIDENTIAL, PROFESSIONAL  
CATEGORY

Coville Residence

### 1st place, residential, professional category—Joe Billings, The Landscaping Artist, for the Colville residence

"A small-canyon look with native and regional plants." "Plant placement very attractive to wildlife." "Lots of color. Every plant is low-water-use."

In addition to its first-place award, the Colville residence, created by Joe Billings, The Landscaping Artist, also received a name—The Wonderland of Rocks Habitat Garden. Billings designed the landscape to have the look and feel of a lush, natural habitat, with paved-rock streambeds that allow roof runoff to flow slowly through and next to plants. This striking landscape displays several unique features, including a sunken sitting area walled by natural boulders and a "campfire" fueled by hidden gas outlets to add warmth and comfort on frosty evenings.

Sitting nooks formed by large boulders border pathways among lush plantings, allowing visitors to observe quail, hummingbirds, and butterflies. Stepping stones connecting the perimeter pathways provide the experience of crossing a natural stream. The main landscape terrace features a broad selection of water-efficient shrubs, perennials, and accent plants that add color and interest throughout the year.




**2nd place, residential, professional category—Marla Ruane of Greening Fine Gardens, for the Schorr residence**

“Enjoyed the garden sculpture and art.” “Lots of detail, lots of color.” “Overall, very nice.”

With a primary goal of expanding and updating outdoor living areas, landscape designer Marla Ruane designed a complete renovation of the backyard of this Colonia Solana-area home. The formerly “very East Coast” landscape now bursts with low-water natives that provide a fitting Southwestern accent throughout the year. A major modification involved the light-colored pool decking. Its size overwhelmed the senses, and it reflected too much light. Ruane removed a section and installed a native desert planting in its place. New featured plants include *Acacia cultiformis*, knife acacia, *Cereus peruvianus*, *Euphorbia rigida*, and several *Trichocereus* hybrids. Desert marigold, angelita daisy, and penstemon add waves of perennial color. In addition to being awarded second place, residential, professional, this home landscape received the Judges’ Award for Best Retrofit of a High-Water-Use Landscape.

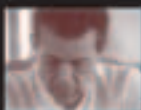


## X E R I S C A P E C O N T E S T 2 0 0 4

If you're inspired to enter your Xeriscape landscape, Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) and Tohono Chul Park will again sponsor the contest in 2004. Separate categories are available for homeowners and professionals. Entries will be accepted Jan. 1–Apr. 1, 2004. For information call Tohono Chul Park (742-6455) or ADWR (770-3816), or visit [www.water.az.gov](http://www.water.az.gov), then click on Xeriscape. 

## TAYLOR DESIGN+BUILD

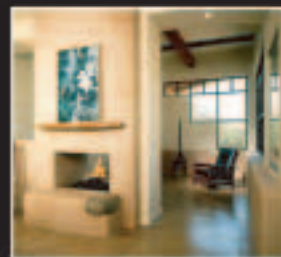
ORIGINAL  
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Bill Taylor  
Architect



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